

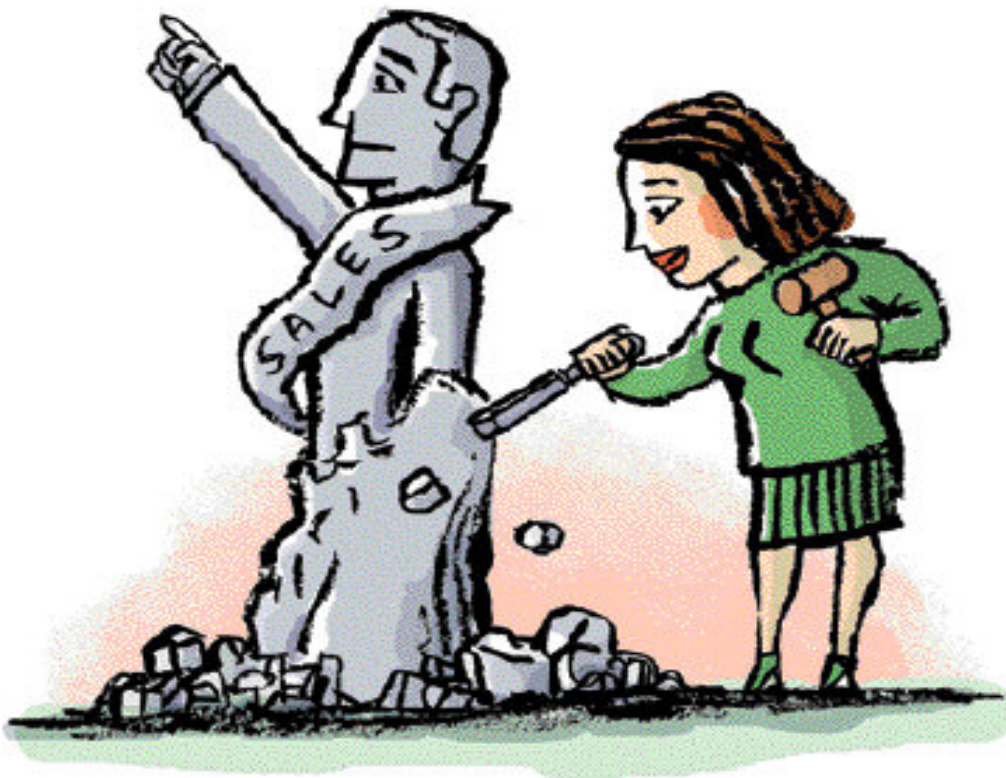
Personal Touch

Great sales managers create powerful sales environments by developing individual coaching relationships. By Rick Davis

The newly hired sales manager quickly discovers that no training manual comes with the job, and thus quickly becomes frustrated at the daunting task of improving the performance of others. The skills of managing are vastly different than selling. A great sales manager must create vision, set goals, and create measurements as well as coach for performance improvement in the field.

Proactive Approach

A great sales manager is a leader who is keenly aware of the specific behaviors that will create desired results for the company. Unfortunately, many people who assume this position fail at the outset because they fall prey to the notion that the end justifies the means. But does it? This theory, proposed by the 16th century political philosopher Machiavelli in *The Prince*, stirs debate to this day on a host of subjects. For sales managers, this philosophy can seemingly make life easy. They might believe that if the salesperson achieves the ultimate end—i.e. successful sales results—then there is no need to become overly concerned with the means by which the objective was met.



Rick Davis is president of Building Leaders, Inc., a Chicago-based sales training organization. 773.769.4409. E-mail: rickdavis@buildingleaders.com

If there is anything in today's business environment that is harder to find than quality salespeople, it is a wealth of sales management skills. Sales managers throughout the country express frustration about the performance of their sales teams, yet sales managers often fail to realize that they should do more than merely observe and manage the existing skills of their salespeople if they wish to see improved performance. They must shoulder the responsibility to create and nurture the skills they desire among their direct reports. With this objective in mind, the *Sell Sheet* series for this year will focus on methods that enable sales managers to improve their performance and, more importantly, the performance of their sales teams.

Organizations typically promote the top sales performers to the position of sales manager assuming that they will easily be able to transfer their skills to others.

But what happens when the salesperson does not achieve the desired end?

If a seemingly talented salesperson fails, then the sales manager and the salesperson's associates are left wondering what went wrong. Observers often inaccurately assume that the salesperson was lazy; however, in some cases a salesperson was doing the correct things but, because his behaviors were not reinforced properly, he stopped performing right before the desired results were achieved.

In this situation, rather than provide positive feedback that will generate optimum results, sales managers often become critical. They assume that negative feedback will apply pressure that will create performance improvements. In other words, sales managers falsely believe that their focus on end results alone is enough to manage performance, and they fail to recognize the direct correlation

Sell Sheet

between the means and the end. For many managers, performance feedback is nothing more than Monday morning quarterbacking. When the ends are achieved, praise is abundant, but when goals are not realized, criticism abounds.

The best sales managers today are the ones who can impact the results before it is too late. Thus, a sales manager should be able to identify which

manager has to be a better salesperson than the individual being managed; it merely means that leadership requires acceptance of responsibility and vision.

Path to Profit

Salespeople respond more readily to credibility than to authority. Try the following steps to ensure that you are on the right path toward establishing

is that the sales manager often is the last to know. Establishing credibility requires trust. The salesperson needs to believe the sales manager is trustworthy and capable of supporting the salesperson with fairness. The salesperson must have faith that reasonable requests will be supported. It also can mean that the sales manager is open to discussing his employees' personal



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But, to build a successful coaching relationship with a salesperson, a sales manager must establish credibility as a leader. This does not imply that the

your role as a sales leader.

1. Establish credibility with trust. Credibility is not granted by the title on a business card. At one point during their career, every salesperson works with a manager for whom they have little or no respect. The problem

problems at times. A little personal support can go a long way.

2. Establish credibility with knowledge. A great coach has knowledge that is valued by the sales team and is capable and eager to share that knowledge with his or her

employees. However, a delicate balance should be achieved. A sales manager who goes overboard to prove his superiority may destroy credibility by violating trust. Thus, a great sales manager shares knowledge judicious-

recent sales management training sessions, the entire group of attendees agreed that they had not stopped to consider this question in sufficient detail. Moreover, when a manager does take the time to ask the question,

as well as a productive environment, service staffing, sales tools, and the like. On the other hand, a mediocre performer probably needs a sales manager with exceptional mentoring skills. Overall, the role of every sales manager will vary from company to company and from employee to employee. It is important to possess chameleon-like skills to adapt to various individuals and situations.



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ly, either to help a person in need or, at times, to demonstrate his expertise on a particular subject.

3. Clarify what you offer to your salespeople. As a coach, it is important for you to understand what you bring to the table. As a sales manager, you must ask yourself, “What benefits do salespeople receive while working for me?” During one of my

he or she usually arrives at the same inadequate answer—money.

Money alone is not enough to attract and retain great talent, so it is vital for the sales manager to clarify the specific values he or she offers a salesperson. For example, the needs of one salesperson may be quite different than another’s. A great salesperson may need support more than guidance,

Great sales managers offer personalized support to their salespeople, both as supportive leaders and as mentors. At the end of the day, they must take responsibility for the success of each individual performer on their teams and recognize that each salesperson has individual talents that they can help to mold and develop. Good sales managers are like master sculptors who chisel away rough edges and form the models that will stand as icons of outstanding performance. ■